

SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

March 14, 2003
Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
Modesto, California

Welcome and Introductions

The San Joaquin River Management Program Advisory Council met at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center in Modesto, California. There were no comments on the draft minutes of the December 11, 2002 meeting. Draft minutes from the most recent meeting and pertinent documents are posted on the SJRMP website at:

<http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd/sjrmpp/index.html>

Tim Ramirez, Resources Agency, discussed the Legacy Project workshops that were held in Fresno on March 12 and 13. The Legacy Project is a State Resources Agency initiative involving a broad range of public agencies and citizen groups working together to develop information and tools for making better investments in resource conservation, private lands stewardship, and rural recreation. Participants provided information and opinions on subjects ranging from Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and available data to plant types, (their impressions of the river). The results of the Legacy workshops will be made available to the public on a future website. Norman Crow was complimented on his presentation about partnership between the RCD, watershed coordinator, and landowners. Many of the participants in the Legacy Project focused on the Tuolumne River and San Joaquin River restoration, land use, and set back levees issues. Mike McElhiney informed the group of the upcoming Permitting and Legacy Project Workshop in Modesto at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center on Tuesday, March 18, 2003.

“Removing Barriers to Restoration” Report

Ramirez gave some background information on the “Removing Barriers to Restoration” report. Starting in the late 1990’s, Mary Nichols began discussions with landowners in Northern California (north of Redding) concerning the difficulties in doing the on-ground work of restoration projects. These informal discussions led Nichols to create a Task Force group to review these issues. The “Removing Barriers to Restoration” report was an attempt to capture the discussions that came out of the Task Force. Including ESA concerns, streamlining permitting, and challenges for RCD’s. The report is available online at http://resources.ca.gov/reports_and_publications.html; no printed version is

available. The report is not meant to reflect opinions for the entire State of California, but some things discussed are shared concerns. Comments or questions concerning the report can be addressed to Tim Ramirez or Cathy Bleier of the Resources Agency at (916)-653-6598.

Proposition 50

Paula Landis, Department of Water Resources, opened the discussion about Proposition 50. Proposition 50 is for security, water quality, and land acquisition. It is not certain when and how much money will be available, or how it will be distributed. The legislature will review the proposition next week to determine how it will fit into the Governor's budget. There will be significant competition between proposed projects supported by Proposition 50. If DWR is allocated any funds rules and regulations will have to be drafted before grant proposals are requested. Landis recommends that everyone track the process closely to get their foot in the door as early as possible.

RWQCB Update of TMDL's and Water Quality Issues

Eric Oppenheimer, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, gave an update on the current water quality TMDL (total maximum daily load) restrictions and water quality issues. The Board has recently reorganized and a new unit was created for ag waivers. TMDL's are required under section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act. The State is required to identify waterbodies not attaining water quality standards, and set priorities for addressing pollutant problems. The TMDL is the maximum amount of pollutant allowed while maintaining water quality standards. A technical TMDL report is created before implementation; the report targets water quality objectives, source analysis, and loading capacity/allocations. TMDL implementation is currently not required by US EPA regulations, but Federal Law requires that TMDLs, upon EPA approval, be incorporated into the State's water quality management plan (Basin Plan). State Law requires that Basin Plans have a program of implementation to achieve water quality objectives. The Board doesn't enforce the implementation of TMDLs but they offer suggestions for permitting, probation, and voluntary action that will help achieve water quality standards. The Board typically encourages stakeholder groups to create their own plan for implementation.

There are over 70 pollutant impaired waterbodies listed in the San Joaquin River (SJR) watershed, including Mendota Pool (added in 2003) as impaired for Selenium, and the mainstem of the SJR for selenium, salt and boron. The most common pollutant listing in the SJR watershed include: chlorpyrifos, diazinon, salts, boron, selenium, organic enrichment/low DO, DDT, group A pesticides, mercury/metals, unknown toxicity, ammonia, and pathogens. The current SJR TMDLs under development include selenium, diazinon and chlorpyrifos,

dissolved oxygen (Stockton Deep Water Ship Channel), and salt and boron. Some of these TMDLs were discussed to detail.

Other issues discussed included the ag waiver. In December 2002 the Regional Board adopted a new waiver. The waiver, in its current form establishes two categories of waivers of waste discharge requirements. From the handout:

“One category applies to dischargers who participate in a group effort on a watershed level to comply with the conditions of the waiver. The other category applies to individual dischargers who do not participate in a group watershed or sub-watershed effort.”

The ag waiver conditions include requirements for discharger monitoring to assess the sources and impacts of waste discharges, prioritization of pollutant sources, and implementation of management practices to prevent the release of wastes to surface waters. The waiver also includes time schedules for completion of key milestones and submittal of deliverables.

Tuolumne River Restoration

Allison Boucher, Friends of the Tuolumne, gave an update on current, future, and completed projects on the Tuolumne River. The Tuolumne River Coalition, another active watershed group on the River, includes mostly the same stakeholders, but also includes groups like the Sierra Club, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. A report summarizing the habitat restoration plan for the lower Tuolumne River corridor prepared for the Tuolumne River Technical Advisory Committee on January 2001 was distributed. The Plan was prepared to assist in identifying and implementing habitat restoration projects to benefit the River's Chinook salmon.

Several agencies and non-profit groups are working to restore the Tuolumne River and its riparian habitat. These projects restore and preserve wildlife habitat, provide open space and recreational opportunities, increase the flood capacity, and improve water quality. Some challenges exist in the watershed including the La Grange dam that prevents spawning upstream, DO depletion from agriculture and municipal use of the Tuolumne River, livestock grazing, gold dredge damage, and active sand and gravel mining.

There are a total of 10 agencies and non-profit organizations included in the restoration plans with a total of \$53,151,820 for funded projects and \$35,085,000 for unfunded projects.

Most of the gravel additions to the river will use dredge tailings left in the floodplain by the gold dredgers. Gravel addition projects will include work on the channel to improve spawning conditions, depth, velocity, and flood control. Pete

Rabbon emphasized the fact that NRCS is working closely with the restoration planning to ensure proper flood control.

Other Business

The SJRMP related sites webpage has been updated. We would like members to look at the page and include any additional links that would be useful for visitors to the SJRMP website. Please email Amanda Peisch at apeisch@water.ca.gov with any suggestions.

McElhiney announced two upcoming workshops hosted by Community Alliance with Family Farmer (CAFF) for Stream Bank Stabilization on Monday, March 17 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm in Livingston and Farmscaping to Attract Beneficials and Wildlife on Tuesday, March 18 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm in Merced. For future workshops with CAFF visit their website at www.caff.org.

The next Action Team meeting date was discussed and because of the cut back in staff it was decided that the Action Team will not convene unless the Advisory Council has an action to discuss.

The Next Advisory Council Meeting: is scheduled on Wednesday, June 25 at 9:00 am at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center.

**ATTENDEES AT
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 14, 2003**

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